

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 213 504

PS 012 691

TITLE Criteria for Selecting Play Equipment for Early Childhood Education: A Reference Book.
INSTITUTION Community Playthings, Rifton, NY.
PUB DATE 81
NOTE 44p.
AVAILABLE FROM Community Playthings, Rifton, NY 12471 (no charge).
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Criteria; *Day Care; Disabilities; Early Childhood Education; *Educational Equipment; Individual Needs; Infants; *Play; *Selection; *Special Education; Young Children
IDENTIFIERS Toddlers

ABSTRACT

First listing and discussing optimal features of playthings for early childhood education, this reference book subsequently describes play activities and equipment appropriate for infant and toddler day care programs as well as specially designed equipment for exceptional children. A chart indicating age-appropriate play and classroom equipment for children up to 5 years of age and designed to assist caregivers in making appropriate purchases is included. Many photographs of children using play materials illustrate points made in the text. (Author/RH)

* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *

ED213304

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

- ☒ This document has been reproduced as
received from the person or organization
originating it.
- ☐ Minor changes have been made to improve
reproduction quality.
- Points of view or opinions stated in this docu-
ment do not necessarily represent official FIE
position or policy.

PS 012691

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS
MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Thomas I.
Potts

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."



CRITERIA

for Selecting

PLAY EQUIPMENT

for Early Childhood Education

A Reference Book

What makes Good Playthings? p.3

Infant and Toddler Day Care
Play Activities and Equipment p.18

Exceptional Equipment
for Exceptional Children p.30

Planning Your Play Equipment p.36



Community Playthings
Rifton, NY 12471

©1981 by Community Playthings



Introduction

The Importance of Play

When we see an adult skimming through his work with boundless energy and genuine pleasure, we say, "Why, for him this job is just child's play!" Actually there is something to this phrase, "child's play." While some adults' work reminds us of play, all children's play will remind us of work—if we watch closely. Listen to a child mutter to himself, feel his concentration. You discover that whether he's "it" at hide-and-seek, or pushing a toy car up a ramp, he is determinedly working through a self-appointed task.

Here is a mystery we cannot respect enough—this natural presence of work, in play form. A German writer, Hildegard Hetzer, puts it forcefully: "Many of those adults who are called lazy, or who lack patience, might have gained through play. Only the child who has played long and devotedly grows into a persistent adult who works with joy. If only for this reason, we must treat the child who seems too preoccupied in his play just as we would treat an adult who carries out his work with diligence and devotion."¹

Play is the child's means of discovery, of communication, and of expression. Loving guidance and adequate equipment can open to a child a world where he can unfold and learn to understand himself and those with whom he lives. The environment we provide will say more eloquently than words, "Here is a place to play, to enjoy, to discover"—to learn.

We who must rely for the most part on indoor activity can take a lesson from the world of nature. Sand, trees, rocks, grass, animals, and plants provide endless opportunities for exploration and creativity. Basic needs are satisfied in digging in the earth, balancing on rocks, rolling down grassy slopes, and climbing trees. These belong to childhood, and any child deprived of them is unfortunate indeed. All the more important then, that through our choice of play equipment, we strive to offer similar opportunities to our children.

What qualities should we look for in play equipment? How can we bring active, large-muscle play into the classroom? What special considerations should we bring to selecting equipment for very young or handicapped children? Our attitude to these questions and to the role of play and playthings will greatly affect the quality of the care we offer our children.

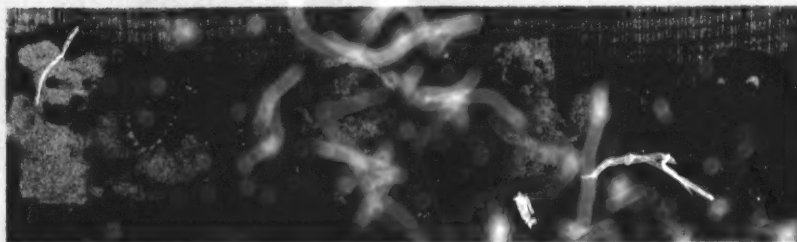
¹Hildegard Hetzer, "Respect for Children's Play," in *Good Toys*, Arbeitsausschuss Gutes Spielzeug e.V., 1960.

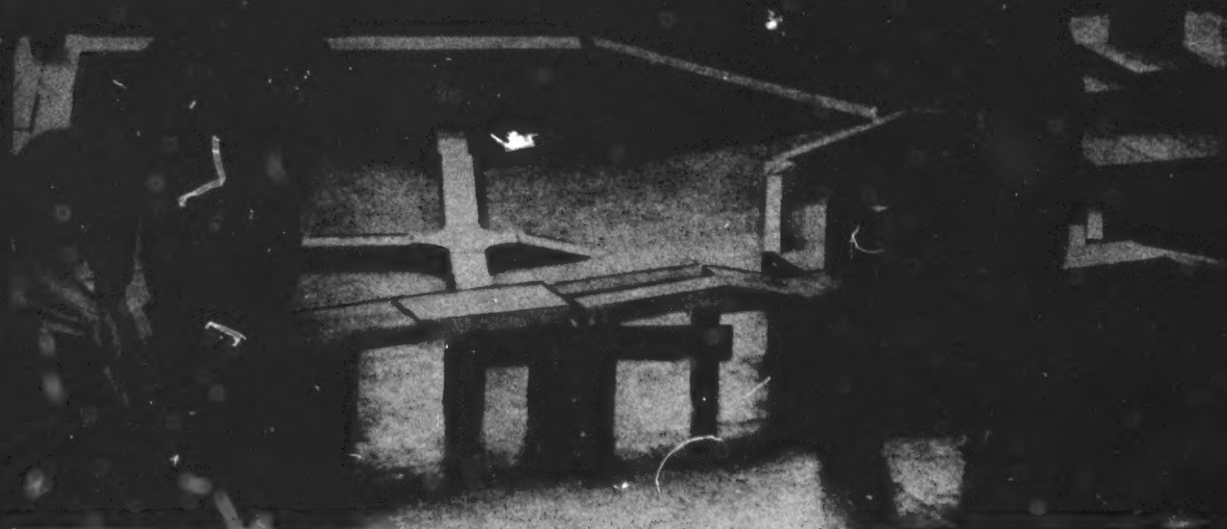


What Makes Good Playthings?

Good playthings should have these characteristics:

- *Free of detail as possible.*
- *Versatile in use.*
- *Easily comprehended.*
- *Large, easily manipulated parts.*
- *Involve child in play, including large muscles.*
- *Encourage cooperative play.*
- *Material that is warm and pleasant to touch.*
- *Durable.*
- *Work as intended.*
- *Safe.*
- *Generous in proportions and quantity.*
- *Price based on durability and design.*





Blocks are the prime unstructured material and undoubtedly the most important equipment in a nursery, kindergarten or schoolroom. Boys and girls respond to the great variety of opportunities blocks open to them: learning manipulation and balance, recreating familiar scenes, building a child's world.

See block sets with the needs of your age group in mind. Nursery children will find fulfillment with plain rectangular shapes.

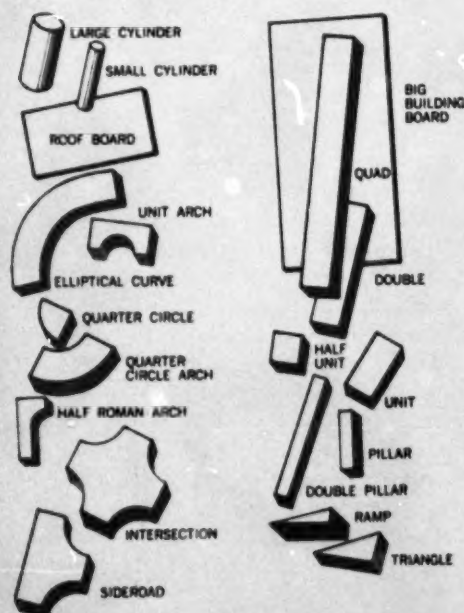
For Kindergarten add the Curves and Arches, Cylinders and Building Boards.

Sets in various sizes available.

The Cart is handy as a pickup or delivery cart for young builders and a real help to clean-up activities.



*"I made enough blocks
for the child to complete
the structure he has in mind."*



Design

Simplicity is the key. A young child's playthings should be as free of detail as possible, allowing him to express himself by creating his own childlike world. Too much detail limits him. The more versatile and unspecialized are his playthings, the more creative and absorbing will be his play. Unit blocks, one of the most essential pieces of equipment for the preschooler, are perhaps the best example of "unstructured" toys. These permit a child to create as he wills, with the next step determined by him, not by the structure of the play material. Blocks, construction sets, and other unstructured equipment such as clay, sand, and paints allow the imagination free rein and are basic playthings.

The Triangle Set is another example of simple yet highly versatile equipment. Children thrill to the discovery of its many combinations, while its generous proportions provide good hard work for their growing muscles. Its simplicity is easily comprehended, not like the mechanical toy which soon lies in pieces on the floor, victim to the urge to "see how it works." The Triangle Set's parts are also easily manipulated, without frustratingly small parts to break or lose. This is important for fingers, muscles, and coordination that are still developing.

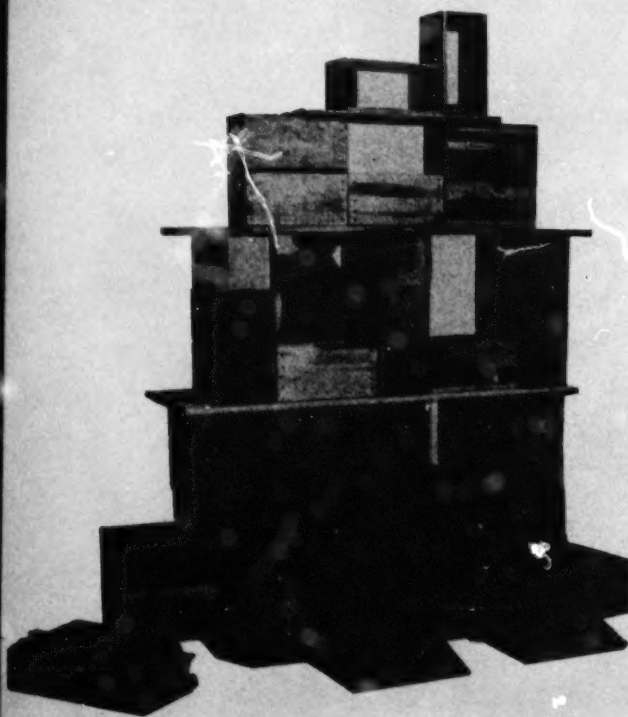
Child Involvement

A good plaything should involve the whole child—body, mind, and spirit. Such a toy will stimulate children to do things for themselves. Equipment which makes the child a spectator, such as the windup dog which turns somersaults, may entertain for the moment, but has little or no play value. Their play equipment should encourage children to explore and create, or offer the opportunity for dramatic play. Those play materials which give the child only a passive role are not tools of play, but objects of diversion.

Some equipment in the classroom must be provided to satisfy the need of growing muscles to push, climb, run, bend, and lift. A gym that can keep half a dozen children playing hard at one time, and be folded out of the



"Serve as roadways for himself and vehicle."



*Hollow Blocks, basic play equipment
designed by Community Playthings.*

way for rest time is a valuable asset. Interest is soon lost in a fixed and permanent slide. A slide that doubles as a balance board, the roof of a play house, a highway, a farm fence, and then returns again to be used as a slide a week later—that slide is a worthwhile investment. Hollow blocks use large muscles, too, though light enough to hoist to the top of the growing construction. The wood used for hollow blocks must stand rough usage without splintering and have all-rounded edges, satisfying to handle. Their design must allow small hands to get a firm grip. Such blocks involve the whole child and are ideal for

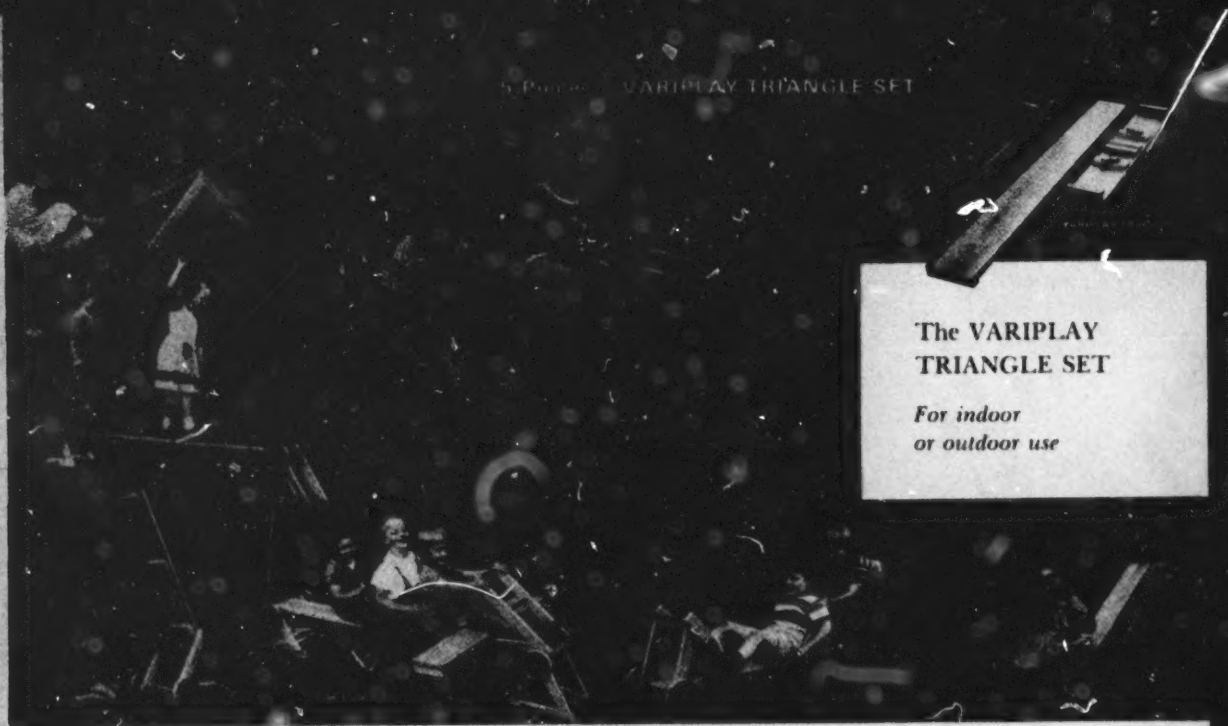
*also needs play equipment which
gives opportunities."*

group use in dramatic play.

For outdoor large muscle play, aluminum is lightweight and weatherproof. Here, too, versatility is the watchword. The best equipment sets up in various combinations, responding to the children's wide-ranging imaginations. A-frames, ladders, and slides become ships, mountains, houses, and caves where fierce bears lurk. Playtime over, they are easily removed and stacked away, freeing valuable space for other purposes. (A further important advantage of the multi-piece set: You can purchase it by the piece, spreading limited equipment funds over more than one year.)







VARIPLAY TRIANGLE SET

The VARIPLAY TRIANGLE SET

*For indoor
or outdoor use*

designed by Community Playthings.

Cooperative play

This is a particularly important criterion in selecting play equipment. Will the equipment encourage cooperative play? Happy hours of self-forgetful play with peers can be a cornerstone for the child's life. "Far from being a land of make-believe designed for a fairy-tale time of life, something to be left far behind as a child grows up, the experiences he lives through in his dramatic play are basic to every area of his adult life."² We cannot bring such play about, but we should provide the opportunity for it to take place. A housekeeping corner with child-size furniture fulfills both the need for dramatization and cooperative play. So will a train with cars big enough to ride on. For that matter you may see your children create a train out of hollow blocks and thin air. You are right there to straighten out differences ("I want to be driver!"), but the thoughtful teacher will realize the great value of these shared experiences as the children's special territory and will trespass only with reluctance.

² Margaret Bemm, "Learning Through Imaginative Play," in *A Creative Guide for Preschool Teachers*, ed. Joanne Wylie (Western Publishing Co., 1966), p. 61.





"They need roomy ovens and dishpans big enough for soap and water and dirty dishes."

Materials

Have you seen a child's face when a bright new toy falls apart in his hands? When it goes to pieces someone has let him down. Children love their playthings, and should be able to depend on them. They need time to develop a relatedness to them, time for the playthings to become trustworthy friends. Playthings which do not last are educationally as well as economically unsound.

Wood and cloth are materials children find particularly appealing. A wooden toy has a warm, friendly feel that is satisfying and reassuring to small hands. Wood like maple, hard and split-resistant, also fulfills the requirement of durability, of utmost importance when toys must stand up to daily use by a roomful of children. A solid, generously proportioned wooden truck will afford many miles to the muscle, provided *all* its materials—wooden body, rubber wheels, bearings, and steel axles—are selected with

real large-muscle use in mind.

The playthings' materials must also insure that the toys really "work." What frustration when a door or drawer won't shut on a cupboard, or a truck's wheels stick! Children will feel insulted when given "kids' stuff." The tools at the workbench should be real tools, not cheap copies sure to break on a real job. Likewise all hinges, casters, wheels, door knobs, and handles should be "real," of high quality industrial-type construction, designed to take the very real beating which is the reality of play.

Materials also affect the safety factor of a plaything. Look for wood that doesn't splinter, wheels that won't pinch, corners and edges carefully rounded. Designs, too, must be safety-conscious, stable and secure without small openings to catch fingers or limbs. True play will always involve an element of risk, but good equipment will minimize it.

"a housekeeping corner with childsize furniture"



*"enough housekeeping
equipment in the
doll corner for all
to imitate a variety
of home experiences."*



*Learning
to
hammer*

Generosity

Play equipment should offer sufficient roominess or quantity to fulfill children's intentions in play. In housekeeping play the fours and fives want to bake pies and wash dishes. They need roomy ovens, dishpans big enough for soap and water and dirty dishes. Wheeled toys should include those big enough for children to ride on and to haul big loads of blocks or other materials. Provide enough

blocks for the child to complete the structure he has in mind. Have a generous enough supply of equipment to permit the children to play together harmoniously.

Elizabeth Prescott has described an excellent example of how quantity and versatility, or "richness," of play equipment promoted peaceful cooperative play. As there were not as many tricycles as children, tricycle play led to tension and discord. The addition of equip-



And so we rejoice with the children in their pleasure in nature, their delight in flowers and forest, their happiness in horses, cows, dogs, goats and rabbits and their joy in deer and birds, and everything else that lives.

"Water, sand, trees and earth"

ment auxiliary to tricycle play—trailers the trikes could pull, blocks to load, traffic signs—permitted happy cooperative play. The children eagerly adopted roles the new equipment required. Some pedalled, some loaded the trailers, some rode in them, some directed the traffic, and the teacher relaxed.³

³Elizabeth Prescott, "The Physical Environment—Powerful Regulator of Experience," in *Caring for Infants and Toddlers: What Works, What Doesn't*, ed. Roger Neugebauer and Robert Lurie, 1980, p. 99.





"Everything is tested by the senses."

In every child there lives right from the beginning a love for the earth, a joy in the starry universe, an enthusiastic interest in the mysteries of atoms and organisms.

Price

Was this the first section you turned to? Price is perhaps the most significant criterion—at any rate the most limiting one. But take care not to exercise false economy here. The *total* usefulness of the plaything must be considered in comparing price. Price should be judged primarily in relationship to the play value of the toy and to its durability. The higher initial investment often proves

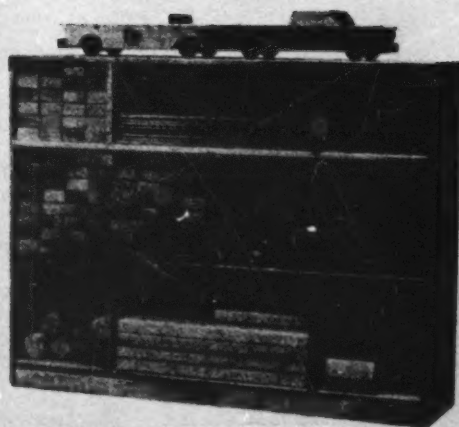
more economical because the materials bought do not have to be replaced repeatedly. The durable, well-designed plaything not only outlasts cheaper toys, but also fulfills the above-mentioned criteria for good play equipment. A solid maple storage unit, craftbuilt with dadoed joints, will be as good as new long after a plywood unit has become rickety, splintered, and downright dangerous.

*Needs
sometimes
to be alone
too.*





*For a real child, love is creative joy
in whatever he loves. In this joy
he abandons himself to the things
that bring him joy.*



Maintenance and care

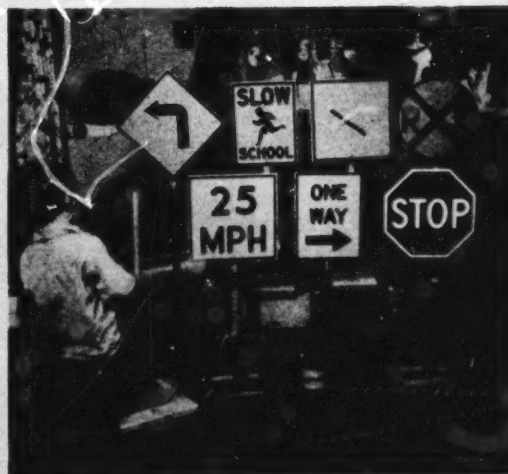
Any worthwhile discussion of play equipment cannot omit its care. Equipment which finds basic use in children's play should be at home in the room and belongs in its own place when not in use. An important part of the play experience is learning to put away afterwards. Ample storage shelves and carts encourage orderly putting away.

Any wooden play equipment subject to



That is why the child can show a trust hardly ever found in us adults. The child is a trusting being made for community.

heavy use will become scarred and dented, but if it is soundly designed and constructed will be none the worse for wear. It is good periodically to refinish such equipment with a clear lacquer or varnish to keep it smooth and protected from dirt. With a little sanding and new finish your wooden equipment can look almost new. Those materials which are not weatherproofed should be kept indoors or well covered.





"first, that the atmosphere be one of warm personal love"

**Infant and Toddler
Day Care:
Play Activities
and Equipment**

18

21

22

Have you ever been exasperated by a two-year-old who gets into everything? Have you ever wondered what on earth you can do with one-year-olds?

The responsibility of providing adequate equipment for the kindergarten and nursery school has been widely recognized by now. But what does the still younger child need—the toddler? The care of the little children of working mothers has long been a critical need, and more mothers work away from home today than ever before. Day care in a variety of forms is surely here to stay.

Those who operate child care centers have a very big responsibility with their staffs for these very little ones—first, that the atmosphere be one of warm personal love in which a little child who is without his parents for many hours a day is free to grow in mind and spirit; second, that the physical care and environment be clean and safe and supervised; third, that these children have play materials and equipment under the care of a motherly teacher, not a baby-sitter. This teacher should be keenly conscious that these are the years in which their bodies and minds and spirits are more ready to learn than at any other period of their lives.



*The Sixer.
Wagon for six.
For your small
group of one
and two year olds*

*Go everywhere,
see everything,
and nobody
gets lost!*





Infant to Toddler

In early infancy the normal child is developing very fast in sensory learning, in the use of large and small muscles for motor control, and in communication which grows into language.

Infants need to stretch arms and legs and focus their eyes, stimulated by a bright mobile over the crib, or a colored toy hung just within reach. The glowing colors in a picture visible from his bath will attract him and interest him long before he can recognize the flower or animal it represents. And he needs between naps to play with a loving person, play which brings him into contact with the life around him in a warm and supporting way. For the busy mother or worker, it might be convenient to have him asleep more often, but it is an error ever to consider child care as a kind of custodial baby-tending, even for the infant.

In the infant who is beginning to crawl and in the toddler up to the relatively steady and competent three, motor coordination is developing rapidly. Everything during his waking day is tested by his senses, and the learning therefrom is stupendous. Development of language is a continuous adventure interwoven with the play experiences that crowd his day. The play equipment available and the attitude of the responsible grown-up towards the child's development is crucial. The child needs definite and long periods of sleep and quiet times by himself, but he also needs play equipment which gives oppor-

"—enough to go around."



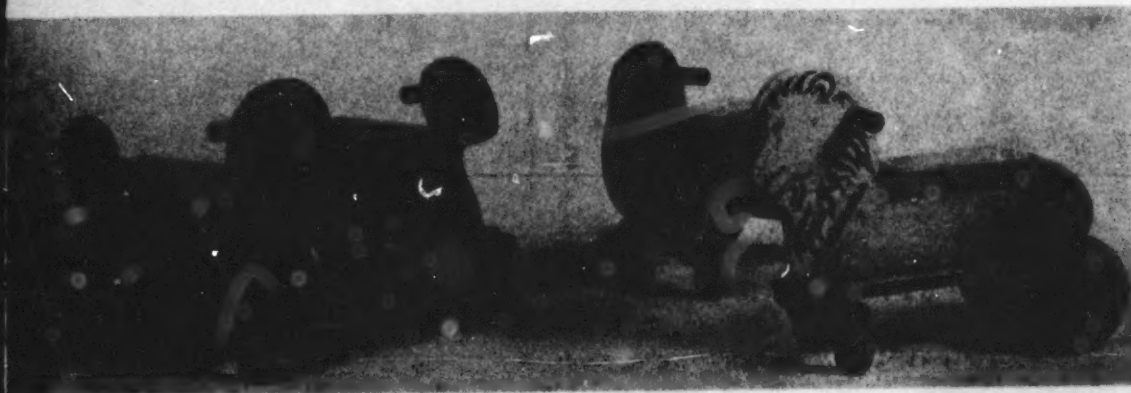


tunities to his fantastically expanding body and mind.

In the home the simplest playthings are often the best. Household articles, water, sand, trees, and earth, with imagination and creativity, make wonderful playthings. But for groups of children the equipment must be sturdy and well-made, simple to clean, and well-thought-out. Since the initial investment

usually must last for years, it is very important that the furnishings and play equipment are durable and easily refinished and repaired when needed. Most important, the toys should be responsive to the toddler himself. When he pushes, they should move easily and correctly. If he pulls, the toy should follow. If he sits on the edge it should not upset but function properly in use and abuse.

"The right size for riding and enough to go around."





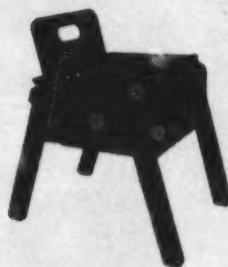
"to be at arm's length and at the child's level"

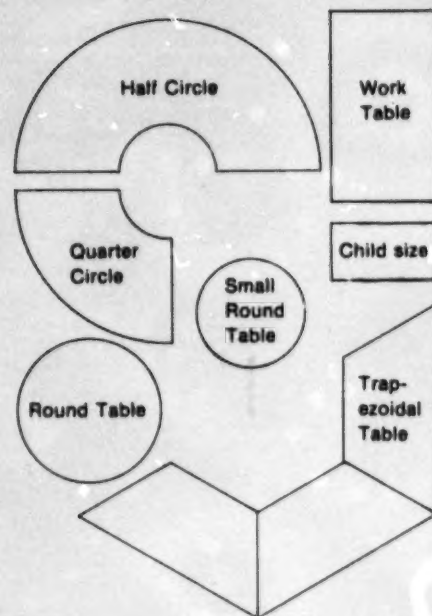
Furnishings

These should be toddler-size with bright pictures (cloth pictures won't tear) hung at toddler eye-level so that the room is his. The tables should be toddler-height and firm and heavy enough to stay in place if climbed upon. Since the children are going to eat together in a group and each is going to need a lot of help, it is very practical for the teacher to be at arm's length and at the child's level to catch the tipping cup and pass the buttered bread to each. Since the child himself is wobbly, the chairs should be broad at the base and easy to stack safely out of the way when not in use, saving valuable floor space.

For all their clumsiness, their strong egos and their often voracious appetites, toddlers can have very valuable and positive experiences when eating with peers. This can be a time of forming good eating habits and healthy attitudes towards food, a time of friendly communication with the teacher, and opportunity to sing very simple songs and to

"Chairs should be easy to stack safely out of the way when not in use."

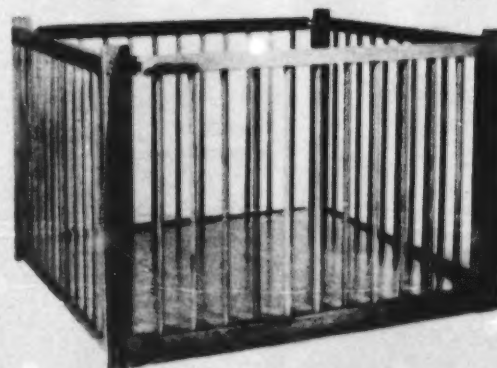




play finger games—all very helpful to the development of language.

Young as he is, the toddler is quick to learn where things belong. Though he will spend hours happily scattering and scrambling his toys, he has pleasure in finding his favorite truck or doll in its place just where he can get at it for himself. Adequate and labeled (perhaps with a picture) storage space is vital for orderliness, but the routine of putting toys away where they belong has educational value, too. There is further need for storage space above the children's reach for items used only at specified times at the teacher's direction.

With a place for everything—dress-ups, dolls, blocks—we encourage cooperative play, when the toddlers suddenly rush for the same equipment. For a brief time all are involved in the same social activity, each in his own individual way. There should be sufficient quantities of materials ready to support this unplanned spontaneous play when it emerges. As children grow into twos and threes, they



*"—needs definite
and long periods
of sleep and
quiet times
by herself."*

*"Play with
a loving person."*



will take different roles and their cooperative play will become more complicated and concentration will last longer. But the joy of losing themselves in play with others occurs even among toddlers.

These are special times when it is easy to form a circle and play the simplest singing games: "Ring around the rosy—all fall down." Most toddlers love music and the rhythm of stamping feet and clapping hands together. A record player and rhythm instruments will be highly enjoyed.

Motor Development

Except when eating and sleeping, the young child is very much on the move, and there should be equipment for climbing, pushing, pulling, rocking, riding—all involving the big muscles. A piece of equipment that offers climbing, sliding, crawling through a barrel, and play at two levels is a valuable investment which will challenge and include several chil-

dren. "Hello, down there!" "Hello, up there!" they will shout as they make the rounds up and down. Climbing apparatus must be safe: in a gym that means stability, rungs carefully spaced, and constant supervision. A simple set of stairs with rails is a safe way to support the urge to climb in one-year-olds and two-year-olds.

Toddlers are still unsteady on their feet, so toys that support and give practice in walking and balance are basic—as we see in any home where the little one is found pushing a hassock or a stool about the house. Pushing is more important than pulling because toddlers want to see what is happening. The small triangle of the Triangle Set with wheels at one base is a firm but easily-moved pushing toy for the child who is just beginning to get about on his feet.

Wheeled toys are very important items—channeling the toddler's need for continuous leg-work. The kiddy-car is an old favorite. Big

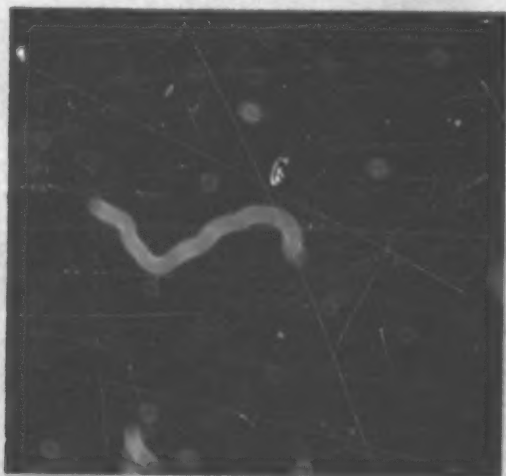


trucks, buses, engines, and tractors which move easily and smoothly and are safe and solid, are in great demand. They should be just the right size for riding and enough to go around, because toddlers often want to ride at the same time, inside or out, wherever there is space. Even before a child can walk alone he will push a large wooden tractor everywhere, totally absorbed by the challenge of maneuvering between obstacles, or of transporting his teddy bear.

Even "ones" love a doll corner; both boys and girls will go there often. Solitary and parallel play is very typical of the toddler; we need enough housekeeping equipment in the doll corner for all to imitate a variety of home experiences. Here is an opportunity for the teacher to encourage language development by simple spoken responses which help the child put into words what he is feeling and thinking.

Small Muscle Development

Toddlers have a great urge to move piles of items: to gather, dump, carry, refill, stack, and knock down. They love to put things into things, to fit pegs (or their fingers) into holes, to fasten things. All these actions are important for developing the fine muscles. There should be areas in the toddler room for materials to challenge and exercise this fine motor development, so integrated with the child's mental development.

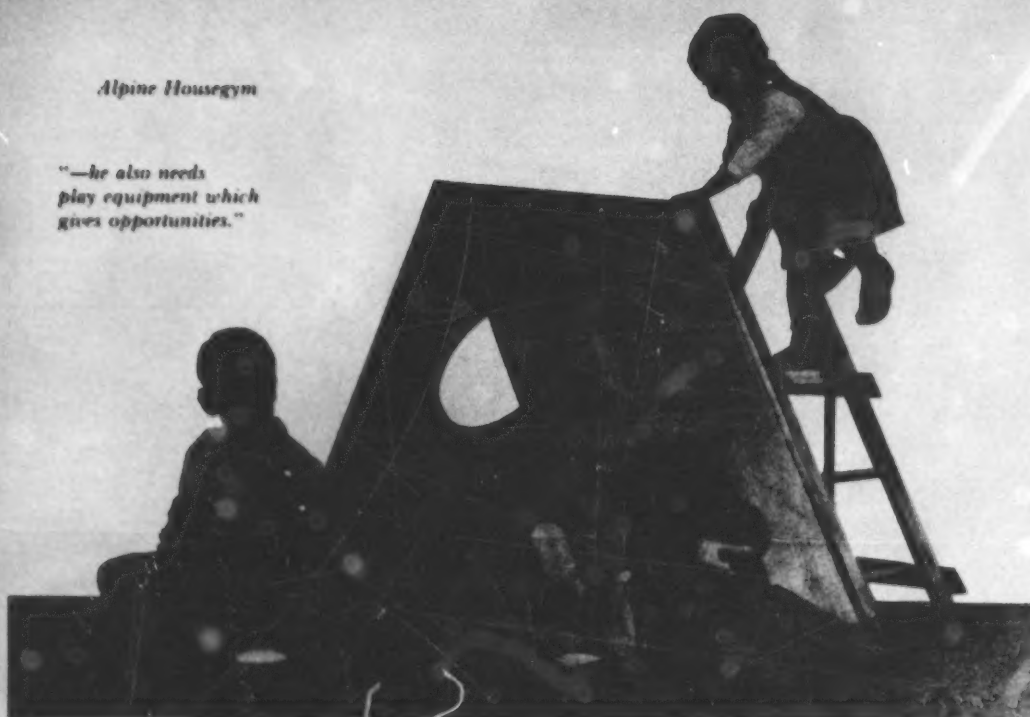


There are many fine manipulative toys on the market which involve coordination of the small muscles, such as pounding benches, stacking cones, nesting toys, peg toys, and threading and lacing toys. One essential standby that serves the toddler until his grade-school years is the standard kindergarten unit block. A simple set of hardwood unit blocks is surprisingly versatile and challenging to the little walker, as are also the big hollow blocks. They will serve as roadways for himself or



Alpine Housegym

*"—he also needs
play equipment which
gives opportunities."*



vehicles, as furniture, as something handy to push about and sit on. These unstructured materials that so quickly can become a house, an extended train, a fence, or a zoo, are vital for group play. Two-year-olds who have been playing entirely parallel or alone, each with his own toy, can within seconds respond to some lead and become passengers in a bus. Each one pushes his hollow-block seat to a place in the line-up and then, toys still clutched in their arms, off they go! It may not

last long, and there may be no driver yet, only passengers—or all drivers—but it is a lovely time with spontaneous chants and songs and lusty good-byes and waves to Teacher. They are all caught up for one joyful moment in a group experience. We cannot force this interaction, but should support it with enough equipment when it emerges. This kind of happy life together will help lead toddlers smoothly into the more complex life of the threes.





"There should be sufficient quantities of materials to support this unplanned spontaneous play when it emerges."

Sensory Learning

The toddler learns through his senses. The world about him is all new to the infant, and the toddler is still experimenting and experiencing freshly and tirelessly, with wonderful curiosity. Sand and water, grass and sunshine, rain and snow, flowers and bugs, birds and butterflies, logs and rocks of

the outdoor world are endlessly interesting to the toddler-explorer. Since such natural things are not so easily available to the city child, we must bring what we can to him in the toddler setup. A sand and water table is a reliable friend to teacher and toddler, a place for satisfying and relaxed learning through the feel of things.

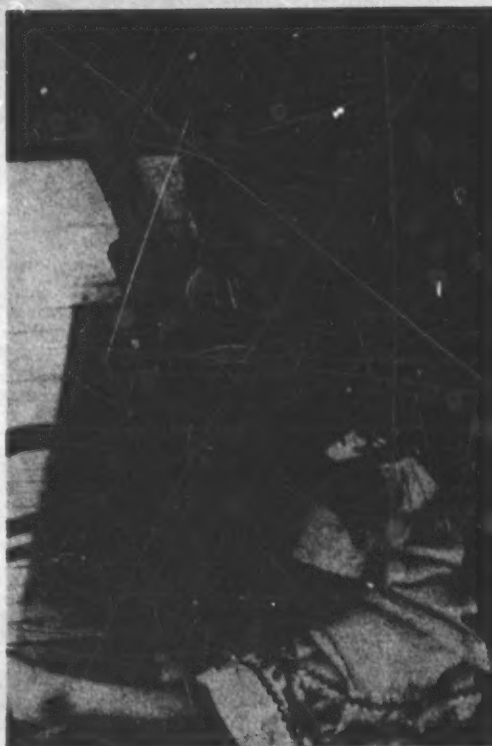
A dress-ups cupboard gives rich opportunity for dramatic play, fun, and involvement.





Soft toys and stuffed animals are comforting and supporting to many toddlers, to those in a group as well as those who may play more solitarily at home. They need soft things (machine-washable for cleanliness) and a variety of textures to feel and touch and hold.

The vital guideline with these little children, still in their very early childhood, is that love, with its warm comfort and encouragement, is what every child must have to develop into the human being that only he was meant to be. Eberhard Arnold once wrote: "Every child is a thought in the mind of God. . . . God knows what this child is meant to become."⁴ No amount of planning and equipment can replace genuine love. But a versatile piece of sturdy equipment geared to the child's growth—not a number of flimsy, highly-differentiated ones—will be your helper in loving support of the little toddler and will see you through thick and thin.



⁴Society of Brothers, ed., *Children in Community* (Plough Publishing House, 1975), p. 1.



Exceptional Equipment for Exceptional Children

"A child spending periods of time sitting must have, first of all, a chair which adjusts to his special needs."

Kenny is a spastic child. Unable to sit normally, he was unable to enjoy a host of activities most of us take for granted: to eat at a table, to enjoy books, above all to play. Playing with blocks, with clay, sand, and water, with toys and dolls—all these his disability denied him. But one day a special teacher came to give Kenny special exercises and treatment. She left for Kenny a new chair, a special chair that fitted him just right, supporting his back and sides and adjusting toward a normal sitting posture. Now Kenny could sit up. This new ability, together with the therapy sessions, opened a bright new world to the spastic child, the world of play.

Susie has cerebral palsy. Her muscles don't always do what her active brain wants, and often do what she never intended. But Susie does all right because her tricycle has attachments added just for her: straps on the pedals and a special seat belt to hold her on. She can ride with her friends, playing hard, those stubborn muscles of hers pulling and pushing just like her brain tells them to.

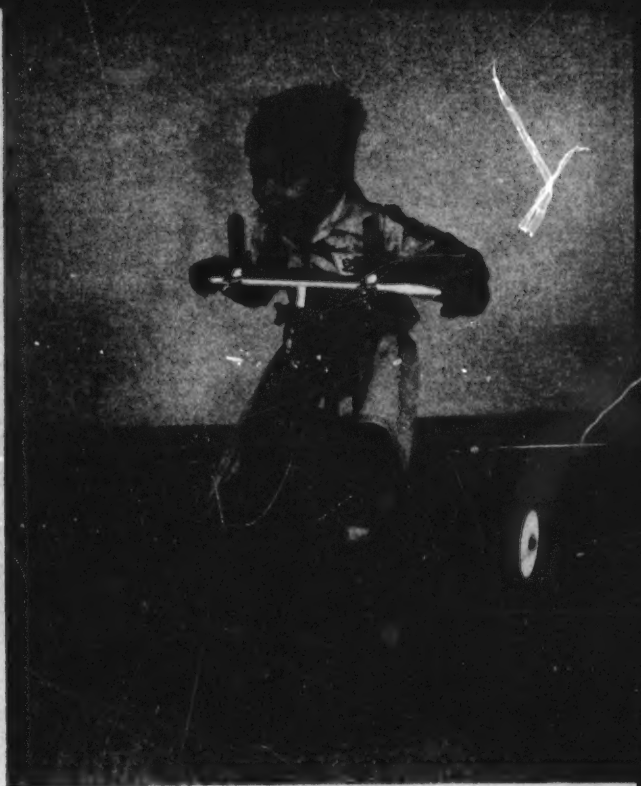
The handicapped child is a child of special needs. This we all recognize, and recent years have seen increasing efforts to meet them. But the perceptive observer will realize that, in addition to the unique needs imposed by his handicap, the special child shares universal



"Susie does all right because her tricycle has attachments added just for her: straps on the pedals and a special seat belt to hold her on."

needs common to all children. A healthy physical environment he needs, and the supporting warmth of loving relationships. He also needs to play.

No less than the normal child, perhaps more, the exceptional child needs free, active



play. Play means release of creative and physical energies. It is the opportunity to learn basic laws of nature. As the very medium of the child's life, play provides the foundation for his future. The best therapy program in the world is incomplete if it does not



*"a tray where the child can
eat, work, draw and play."*



Integrating therapy equipment and ordinary toys.

provide time for happy, unstructured play. We must consider what play, and play alone, gives to the exceptional child.

Real play is the one clinical or classroom situation in which the exceptional child is free of pressure to achieve a specific goal. Because of this, it is our best chance to see this child as he really is; to see and feel potential gifts which do not emerge under stress.

Real play asks for a friendly and relaxed atmosphere. Here is an avenue along which we move toward warm relationships,

meaningful communication, and growing trust between child and child, teacher and child.

Real play has no rules. It is the one situation where a child is free to "do it wrong." A child begins to build a tower. We see a misplaced block and want to forestall the crash. But the thoughtful adult will not interrupt play with corrections. He or she will see play as a series of experiments. What a child learns through the experiments of play are not just forgettable facts, but experiences that stick



*"for the first time
the thrill of
self-propelled
mobility."*

with him. What the exceptional child accomplishes in play can be the achievement which outbalances a host of failures met elsewhere in life.

Let them play. The special child needs more than a planned program of therapy, to say nothing of mere custodial care. He needs to play. But this is more easily said than done. Of a host of obstacles—administrative, financial, practical—the child's handicap most effectively prevents pure, simple, independent play. Susie and Kenny *couldn't* play; their handicaps prevented it. It was the combination of therapy and appropriate equipment which overcame their handicaps.

Susie's and Kenny's names are fictitious, but their stories are not. How many times have we seen or heard of these situations repeated. A child previously confined to bed, but now positioned on a prone board, is able for the first time in her life to work and play at a table, and experience the sensation of standing. What a difference this makes for the child. How it heightens her delight in life and prevents musculo-skeletal deformities, the tragic results of a lifetime in bed. Or a child who would never walk on his own, when placed on a scooter board, feels for the first time the thrill of self-propelled mobility. His inarticulate shout of pure delight tells the whole story—the difference it makes for his life.

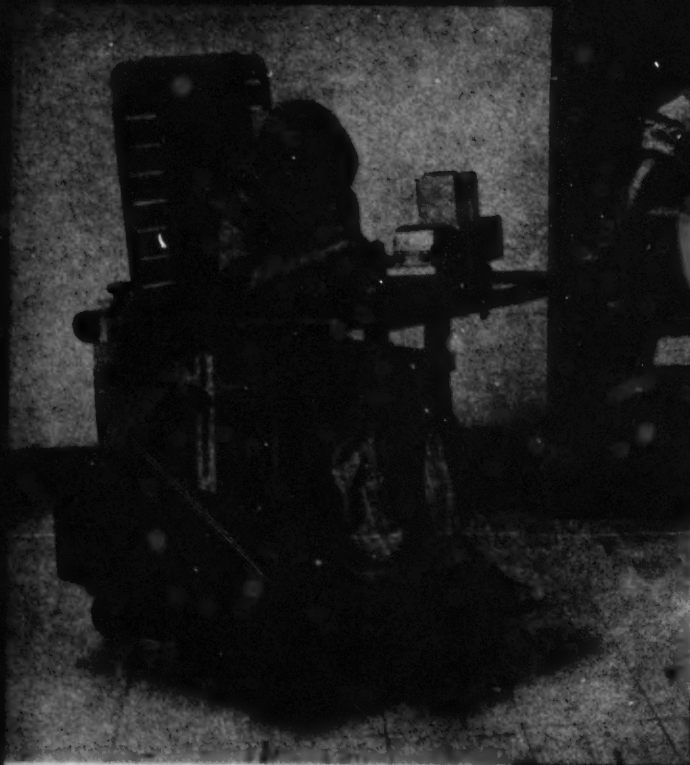
Special equipment can make the difference for the special child, a difference which is sometimes very nearly miraculous. Growing numbers of therapists are realizing equipment's vital role. Determined to have the right equipment for their children, and unable to find it on the market, therapists have approached Community Playthings with their original ideas in the equipment line.

The result is the Rifton Equipment pictured here.

The special child needs special equipment, but that is not all. It is the purpose of therapeutic equipment to enable the child as far as possible to participate in normal life and in normal play. This calls for an integrated approach to equipment, providing special equipment to allow the child to play, and standard equipment to play with. Here all the criteria for good equipment discussed previously in this booklet apply. Durability will be of particular importance, as the equipment must survive the hard treatment of poorly controlled muscles.

Creative integration of special and standard equipment leads to many exciting new possibilities. A non-ambulatory child, placed on a scooter board, can lose himself in unit block play. His new mobility frees his creative urge, and he begins to sense mathematical concepts in the size, shape, and weight relationships of the blocks.





*"—begins to sense
mathematical concepts in size,
shape and weight relationships of
the blocks."*

*"The beauty and precision assembly
of well-made playthings are not
wasted on these children."*



*"Sand and water play
is a treat for any child."*

A child who must spend periods of time sitting must have, first of all, a chair which adjusts to his special needs. It is important that the chair accept a tray where the child can eat, work, draw, and play, engaging in all possible normal activities with standard toys and equipment.

A prone board allows a child to work and play at a table in a nearly upright position. Here, too, he can play. Giving him a plaything that tells him you love and respect him means a lot. Because his play is confined to the tabletop, we need not assume that the right toy is a small one. The beauty and precision assembly of well-made playthings are not wasted on these children. They sense that these toys are "extra special." They know that someone who cares has provided them.

Sand and water play is a treat for any child, particularly one whose handicap restricts activity. One therapist removed the legs from her sand and water table. Her children lay on therapy wedges placed around it. Through the tactile stimulation of water, sand, moss, or ferns placed in the pan, they gained valuable insights into nature, and had a lot of fun.

The integration of special and standard equipment is especially important when mainstreaming requires that every child be educated in the least restrictive environment. A swing with interchangeable standard and special seats can be a real asset, or a rocking boat which accepts a special vestibular board which any child would enjoy.

The possibilities are endless. With a little imagination you can find the perfect combination of special and standard equipment. Hard choices must be made to stretch already thinly budgeted funds. Every possible funding source must be explored. Local and government programs can help. Perhaps parents and friends can contribute toys outgrown but still serviceable. But somehow this critical need must be met. A simple piece of equipment, together with thoughtful and loving care can make all the difference for a Susie or a Kenny. It is the obligation of teachers, administrators, parents, and manufacturers that these opportunities are made available. It is worth it.

The vital guideline with these little children is that love, with its warm comfort and encouragement, is what every child must have to develop into the human being that only he was meant to be. Bernhard Arnold once wrote:

Every child is a thought in the mind of God. . . . God knows what this child is meant to become. No amount of planning and equipment can replace genuine love. But a versatile piece of sturdy equipment geared to the child's growth. . . . Not a number of flimsy, highly differentiated ones, will be your helper in loving support of the child and will see you through thick and thin.

PLANNING YOUR PLAY EQUIPMENT

Age Group	Block and Dramatic Play	Large Muscle Equipment	Housekeeping
6 mo.—1 yr.	Foam blocks Soft animals		Soft dolls
1 yr.—2 yr.		Toddler stairs Driving bench Large foam blocks Toddler barrel Tire swing	Add: Doll bed Doll blankets Doll mattress Unbreakable doll Wooden telephone
2 yr.—3 yr.	Add: Unit blocks Wooden figures	Add: Doll wagon Hollow blocks Rocking boat Small size jungle gym Simple climber & slide Tricycle	Add: Simple doll clothes Doll carriage Childsize furniture: sink, stove, etc., pots & pans Aprons
3-yr. olds	Add: Doll house, small dolls, furniture	Add: Walking board Large wooden nesting boxes Scooter	Add: Ironing board, iron Rocking chair Broom, dustpan
4-yr. olds	Add: Puppets Puppet theater <u>More Unit Blocks</u>	Add: Planks Wheelbarrow Swings Slide Shovel, pail & rake Triangle set Coaster wagon Larger Climber and Slide	Add: Chest of drawers Washbasin Clothesline & pins Basket Aprons, ties, etc. Childsize bed, cradle, carriage, wardrobe
5-yr. olds	Add: Derrick	Add: Balls Roller Skates	Add: Indian Teepee

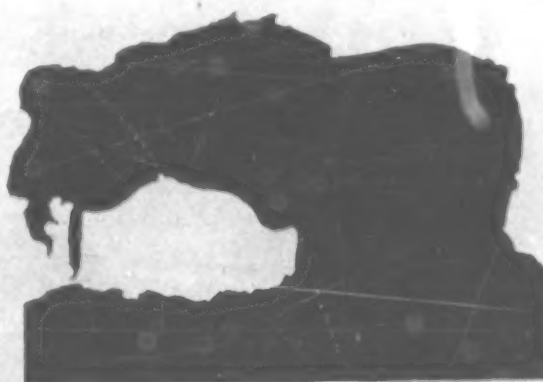
The above should be viewed as happy possibilities. You yourself decide each item

Transportation	Creative Art and Books	Classroom Furnishings	Miscellaneous
6-Toddler Wagon Stroller		Infant Seat Crib	Soft ball Cradle gym Mobiles Standard crib & mattress Music boxes
Add: Small solid cars Ride-a-stride Animals Cars & trains for pushing	Large crayons Hard books Cloth books Records Record player	Add: Clothing lockers Storage shelves	Add: Stacking & nesting toys Pull toys Pop beads Stacking cones Peg boards
Add: Tractor & trailer Kiddie car Big cars & trucks for hauling & riding	Add: Books	Add: Bookcase Block cart Play table & chairs	Add: Simple puzzles Large wooden threading beads Small cots Rest mat Rest mat cover sheet
Add: Airplanes	Add: Easels Paints Brushes Blunt scissors	Add: Work & library tables & chairs Sand & water play table	Add: Wooden puzzles Portable screens (room dividers) Cots Plants
Add: Riding train	Add: Clay	Add: Storage cart Work & library tables & chairs Chalk, peg & bulletin boards	Add: Aquarium Pets
		Add: Woodworking bench Tool cabinet Tools	Add: Giant dominoes Construction set

to fit your available space and the particular circumstances of each of your children.

Numbers in parenthesis refer to photos		page
A-Frames	7,(8)	
Airplanes		37
Alpine Housegym	(27)	
Aluminum	7	
Aprons		36
Aquarium		37
Basket		36
Beads		37
Bemm, Margaret		9
Big Cars		37
Big Trucks		37
Blocks and Cart	(4-5),(6),(27),(34),	37
Books, Bookcase		37
Broom and pan		36
Brushes (paint)		37
Carriage	(20),	36
Cars		37
Catalog		40
Cerebral Palsy		30
Chairs	22,35,	37
Chalkboard		37
Chest of Drawers		36
Child-size Equipment	(10),	36
Children in Community	29,	40
Clay		37
Climbing and Climbers ...	(7),(8),21,25,	36
Clothesline and pins		36
Coaster Wagon		36
Communication	2,20	
Community Playthings	6,9,33	
Construction Set	5,37	
Cooperative Play	9,12,25,25,	27
Cots	(24),	37
Cradle	(26),	36
Cradle Gym		37
Crayons		37
Crib	(25),	37
Day Care		19
Derrick		36
Design	5,10	
Disability		30
Doll (clothes, house, wagon, etc.) ..	(3),	36
Dramatic Play	5,7,28	
Dress-ups Cupboard		28
Driving Bench		36
Durability	10,15,21,33	
Easels		37
Exceptional children, Equipment		30
Finger Games		23
Foam Blocks		36
Furnishings		22,36
Generosity		12
Giant Dominoes		37
Group Experience, Play		27
Gym	(7),(8),	25
Handicapped children, Equipment ..	2,30,35	
Hetzer, Hildegard		2
Hollow Blocks	6,26,36	
Housekeeping Corner	9,(10),	26
House-Gym	(8)	
Indian Tepee	(16)	
Infant Seat		37
Infant to Toddler		20
Involvement		5
Iron, Ironing Board	(11),	36
Jungle Gym	(7),(8),25,36	
Kiddie Car		26,37
Lacquer		17
Ladders		7
Language	20,23,26	
Large Muscle	5,6,7,36	
Lockers		37
Mainstreaming		35
Maintenance		16
Manipulative Toys		26
Materials		10
Mobiles		37
Mobility		33
Motor development		25
Muscles	20,25,26	
Musculo-skeletal Deformities		33
Music, Music Boxes	25,37	
Nesting Toys	26,37	
Nesting Boxes		36
Outdoor Equipment		7
Paints		37

Peg Toys and Boards	26,37	Tables	(22),23,37
Pets	37	Telephone	36
Planks	36	Therapy Equipment	30,33,35
Plants	37	Threading Toys	26
Play Tables	37	Tire Swing	36
Pop Beads	37	Toddler Tower	(26)
Pounding Benches	26	Toddler Barrel	(26),36
Prescott, Elizabeth	13	Tools and Cabinet	10,37
Price	15	Tractor, Trailer	26,37
Prone Board	(32),33,35	Traffic signs	13,(17)
Pulling Toys	37	Train	9,37
Puppets	(3),36	Tray	(30),(31),(32),35
Pushing	25	Triangle Set	5,(9),25,(26),36
Puzzles, Wood	37	Tricycle	12,30,(31),36
		Trucks	(34)
Records, Player	25,37		
Rest Mats, Beds, Covers, Sheets	37	Unbreakable Doll	36
Ride-a-Stride Animals	(21),37	Unit Blocks	(4),5,26,(27),33,(34),36
Riding	(20),26	Unit Blocks Cart	(4),37
Riding Train	37	Unstructured Toys	5
Rifton Equipment	33		
Rocking Boat	35	Versatility	7
Rocking Chair	35	Vestibular Board	35
Rhythm	25		
Safety	10	Wagon for Six	(19)
Sand	21,28	Walking Board	36
Sand & Water Table	28,(34),35,37	Wardrobe	36
Scissors, blunt	37	Washbasin	(10-11),36
Scooter, Scooter Board	33,36	Wheelbarrow	36
Screens	37	Wheeled Toys	26
Sensory Learning	20,28	Wood	10,17
Shovel, Pail and Rake	36	Wood Figures	(19),36
Simplicity	5	Woodworking Bench	37
Sink	36		
Six-Toddler Wagon	(19),37		
Slide	6,(7),(8),(21),36		
Small muscle development	26		
Soft Toys	29,36,37		
Songs	22		
Spastic Child	30		
Special Chair	30,35		
Special Child, Equipment	30,33,35		
Spontaneous Play	23		
Stacking Cones, Toys	26,37		
Stairs	(21),25,36		
Storage	15,16,23,37		
Stove	36		
Stroller	37		
Supervision	19,25		
Swings	(33),35,36		



Nathan, age 6.

*Many of the photos and quotations used in these pages
are taken from Children in Community
published by the Plough Publishing House,
Rifton, New York 12471*

For further information we suggest that you write to:

**American Association
of Elementary-Kindergarten-Nursery Education**
1201 16th Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20036

Association for Childhood Education International
3615 Wisconsin Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20016

Bank Street College of Education
610 West 112 Street
New York, NY 10025

Day Care and Child Development Council of America, Inc.
711 14th Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20005

National Association for the Education of Young Children
1834 Connecticut Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20009

Fully illustrated free CATALOGS of the kind of equipment
described and illustrated here are available. For standard
play equipment and classroom furniture write to:

Community Playthings
Rifton, NY 12471

For adaptive equipment for handicapped children write to:

Rifton Equipment
Rifton, NY 12471

This booklet is available in quantity for group use
from Community Playthings.

